



OFFICE *of the* ATTORNEY GENERAL
GREG ABBOTT

April 22, 2003

Mr. John Feldt
Assistant District Attorney
Denton County Criminal District Attorney
P.O. Box 2850
Denton, Texas 76202

OR2003-2679

Dear Mr. Feldt:

You ask whether certain information is subject to required public disclosure under chapter 552 of the Government Code. Your request was assigned ID# 179754.

The Denton County Criminal District Attorney (the "district attorney") received a request for photographs relating to a particular case. The requestor also asked for a detailed explanation as to why the district attorney chose not to pursue charges in the case. You claim that the requested information is excepted from disclosure under sections 552.103 and 552.108 of the Government Code.¹ We have considered the exceptions you claim and reviewed the submitted information.

We first note that the request asks the district attorney to answer factual questions. This office has stated on numerous occasions that the Public Information Act (the "Act") does not require a governmental body to answer factual questions or perform legal research. *See, e.g.*, Open Records Decision Nos. 563 at 8 (1990), 555 at 1-2 (1990). A governmental body must only make a good faith effort to relate a request to information that it holds. *See* Open Records Decision No. 561 at 8 (1990). We assume that the district attorney has made a good faith effort to relate the entire request, including the request for an explanation, to information the district attorney maintains and that the district attorney has identified and

¹ Although you also raise section 552.107 and 552.111, you provide no arguments explaining why these sections apply to the information. *See* Gov't Code § 552.301(e) (governmental body must provide comments explaining why exceptions raised should apply to information requested). Therefore this ruling does not address those exceptions.

released any responsive information that it has not submitted for our review, to the extent that such information exists. If not, then it must do so at this time. *See* Gov't Code §§ 552.301, .302; Open Records Decision No. 664 (2000).

Section 552.108 provides in pertinent part:

(a) Information held by a law enforcement agency or prosecutor that deals with the detection, investigation, or prosecution of crime is excepted from the requirements of Section 552.021 if:

(1) release of the information would interfere with the detection, investigation or prosecution of crime; [or]

(2) it is information that deals with the detection, investigation, or prosecution of crime only in relation to an investigation that did not result in conviction or deferred adjudication;

....

(b) An internal record or notation of a law enforcement agency or prosecutor that is maintained for internal use in matters relating to law enforcement or prosecution is excepted from the requirements of Section 552.021 if:

(1) release of the internal record would interfere with law enforcement or prosecution of crime; [or]

(2) the internal record or notation relates to law enforcement only in relation to an investigation that did not result in conviction or deferred adjudication[.]

Gov't Code § 552.108(a)(1), (2), (b)(1), (2). Generally speaking, subsections 552.108(a)(1) and 552.108(b)(1) are mutually exclusive of subsections 552.108(a)(2) and 552.108(b)(2). Subsection 552.108(a)(1) protects information the release of which would interfere with a particular pending criminal investigation or prosecution while subsection 552.108(b)(1) covers information the release of which would interfere with on-going law enforcement and prosecution efforts in general. In contrast, subsections 552.108(a)(2) and 552.108(b)(2) protect information that relates to concluded criminal investigations or prosecutions that did not result in conviction or deferred adjudication.

In this instance, you state that the requested photographs pertain to a case in which prosecution was declined and indicate that you do not anticipate that the case will be re-opened and litigated in the future. Based on these representations, we conclude that the

submitted information relates to a case that concluded in a result other than conviction or deferred adjudication, and it may therefore be withheld pursuant to section 552.108(a)(2).²

This letter ruling is limited to the particular records at issue in this request and limited to the facts as presented to us; therefore, this ruling must not be relied upon as a previous determination regarding any other records or any other circumstances.

This ruling triggers important deadlines regarding the rights and responsibilities of the governmental body and of the requestor. For example, governmental bodies are prohibited from asking the attorney general to reconsider this ruling. Gov't Code § 552.301(f). If the governmental body wants to challenge this ruling, the governmental body must appeal by filing suit in Travis County within 30 calendar days. *Id.* § 552.324(b). In order to get the full benefit of such an appeal, the governmental body must file suit within 10 calendar days. *Id.* § 552.353(b)(3), (c). If the governmental body does not appeal this ruling and the governmental body does not comply with it, then both the requestor and the attorney general have the right to file suit against the governmental body to enforce this ruling. *Id.* § 552.321(a).

If this ruling requires the governmental body to release all or part of the requested information, the governmental body is responsible for taking the next step. Based on the statute, the attorney general expects that, within 10 calendar days of this ruling, the governmental body will do one of the following three things: 1) release the public records; 2) notify the requestor of the exact day, time, and place that copies of the records will be provided or that the records can be inspected; or 3) notify the requestor of the governmental body's intent to challenge this letter ruling in court. If the governmental body fails to do one of these three things within 10 calendar days of this ruling, then the requestor should report that failure to the attorney general's Open Government Hotline, toll free, at (877) 673-6839. The requestor may also file a complaint with the district or county attorney. *Id.* § 552.3215(e).

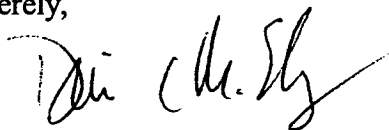
If this ruling requires or permits the governmental body to withhold all or some of the requested information, the requestor can appeal that decision by suing the governmental body. *Id.* § 552.321(a); *Texas Dep't of Pub. Safety v. Gilbreath*, 842 S.W.2d 408, 411 (Tex. App.—Austin 1992, no writ).

Please remember that under the Act the release of information triggers certain procedures for costs and charges to the requestor. If records are released in compliance with this ruling, be sure that all charges for the information are at or below the legal amounts. Questions or complaints about over-charging must be directed to Hadassah Schloss at the Texas Building and Procurement Commission at (512) 475-2497.

²As our ruling on this issue is dispositive, we need not address your remaining arguments.

If the governmental body, the requestor, or any other person has questions or comments about this ruling, they may contact our office. We note that a third party may challenge this ruling by filing suit seeking to withhold information from a requestor. Gov't Code § 552.325. Although there is no statutory deadline for contacting us, the attorney general prefers to receive any comments within 10 calendar days of the date of this ruling.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Den C. McElroy", written over a horizontal line.

Denis C. McElroy
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

DCM/lmt

Ref: ID# 179754

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Ms. Barbara Sutton
1361 Colby Drive
Lewisville, Texas 75067
(w/o enclosures)